

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 16158

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CGEN, CASC, SOPN, BGEN, UR, US
SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER VS. THE PRESS

REF: MOSCOW 16022

1. FOLLOWING MEETING DESCRIBED REFTEL, INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER EXECUTIVE BRIAN REARDON AND INCOMING MOSCOW IH OFFICE HEAD JOHN CHELLMAN CALLED ON CONSULAR COUNSELOR JULY 10 TO COMPLAIN ABOUT WHAT THEY SAW AS DELIBERATE EMBASSY LEAKS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF IH'S ROLE DURING AND AFTER CRAWFORD'S DETENTION. PRESS ATTACHE WAS CALLED TO SIT IN ON SESSION.

2. BOTH EMBOFFS CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT THEY OR ANY OTHER RESPONSIBLE EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES HAD "LEAKED" ANYTHING. OFFICIAL STATEMENTS MADE BY EMBASSY IN RELATION TO CRAWFORD'S SITUATION WERE ON THE RECORD, AND WE AS AN EMBASSY DO NOT ENGAGE IN RUMOR-MONGERING.

3. IH REPRESENTATIVES SEEMED PARTICULARLY UPSET ABOUT REPORTS APPEARING IN NEWSWEEK AND CHICAGO TRIBUNE THAT
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STATEMENT READ BY CRAWFORD AT JUNE 28 PRESS CONFERENCE HAD BEEN PREPARED OR EDITED BY CRAWFORD'S SUPERIORS AGAINST LATTER'S BETTER INSTINCTS. PRESS REPORTS (WHICH WE HAVE NOT SEEN) APPARENTLY SAY THAT CRAWFORD'S PROTESTATION OF INNOCENCE AT PRESS CONFERENCE WAS INSERTED ONLY ON INSISTENCE OF EMBASSY AND THAT ORIGINAL IH VERSION LEFT QUESTION OF CRAWFORD'S GUILT OPEN.

REARDON IN PARTICULAR INSISTED CRAWFORD HAD WRITTEN STATEMENT HIMSELF WITHOUT IH PRESSURE AND THAT PRESS REPORTS TO CONTRARY INDICATED DELIBERATE ATTEMPT BY "EMBASSY PERSONNEL" TO SOIL IH'S GOOD NAME.

4.(ON JUNE 28, CRAWFORD, REARDON, BOOTH AND JOHNSON OF IH SHOWED EMBOFFS BRIEF STATEMENT DRAFTED BY BOOTH FOR CRAWFORD'S USE AT PRESS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR LATER THAT DAY. THEY ASKED PRESS ATTACHE'S REACTION, AND LATTER COMMENTED THAT STATEMENT WAS SHORTER THAN PRESS WOULD HOPE FOR AND DID NOT ADDRESS CRAWFORD'S GUILT OR INNOCENCE, SUBJECT WHICH HAD BEEN PARAMOUNT IN PRESS TREATMENT. IH CONTINGENT CAME BACK LATER WITH LONGER VERSION - ESSENTIALLY WHAT CRAWFORD READ AT PRESS CONFERENCE - AND CRAWFORD TOLD EMBOFFS HE HAD REDONE IT HIMSELF.)

5. BY COINCIDENCE, CHICAGO TRIBUNE AND NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENTS DROPPED IN TO SEE PRESS ATTACHE SHORTLY AFTER LATTER'S ATTENDANCE AT SESSION WITH IH REPS. PRESS ATTACHE ADVISED THEM "FOR YOUR OWN INFORMATION" THAT CRAWFORD HAD INDEED ASSERTED TO EMBOFFS THAT HE HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR REDRAFT OF STATEMENT, BUT BOTH NEWSMEN STATED FIRMLY THAT THEY HAD "UNIMPEACHABLE" SOURCE WHICH HELD THAT BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND DRAFTS CRAWFORD HAD BEEN HEAVILY PRESSURED TO MAKE STATEMENT CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFORM WITH IH DESIRES.

6. COMMENT: DURING MEETING WITH REARDON AND CHELLMAN, PRESS ATTACHE SUGGESTED THAT IF HARVESTER FELT IT WAS AN INJURED PARTY, BEST REMEDY WOULD BE FOR REARDON OR SOMEONE ELSE FROM FIRM TO CALL PRESS CONFERENCE AND PUBLICLY STATE FIRM'S POSITION TO U.S. NEWSMEN. IT WAS NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH IH REPS MAINTAINED FIRM WAS DOING ALL IT COULD "BEHIND THE SCENES" TO DEFEND CRAWFORD, ABSENCE OF INFORMATION FOR THE RECORD INEVITABLY LED TO PRESS SPECULATION. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS, ALSO FROM "UNIMPEACHABLE" SOURCE, THAT SHORTLY AFTER MEETING DESCRIBED IN THIS CABLE REARDON SENT "URGENT-RUSH" TELEX TO IH HEADQUARTERS ASKING FOR "WHITE PAPER" ON FIRM'S EFFORTS ON CRAWFORD'S BEHALF WHICH COULD BE RELEASED TO PRESS HERE. MATLOCK

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